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SUBJECT: Guangdong Governor announces closure of Dongzhou incident

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Guangzhou 32000 (NOTAL); D) 05 Guangzhou 31940 (NOTAL)

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11. (SBU) Summary: Nearly ten months after Dongzhou villagers were sentenced for their role in a December 2005 violent riot in which protestors were killed by police, Guangdong Governor Huang Huahua announced at a press conference on the sidelines of the Chinese national Congress meeting that police officials detained for not following orders properly and shooting protestors dead in Guangdong Province in 2005 had been sentenced. He did not provide further details. With the vagueness of the report and Huang's statementm all from western media sources, it is unclear what punishment was given to police officials. While most government officials had already received minor punishments earlier, such as letters of reprimand from the Party, the Governor's announcement effectively closes the incident. The public statement by the governor is an indication of the seriousness with which the provincial government views the flawed handling of the incident. It is clear the government would like to bring closure to the incident. Governor Huang would, no doubt, also like to close out the incident as it damaged his reputation and of Guangdong Party Secretary Zhang Dejiang. End Summary.

12. (U) Guangdong Provincial Governor Huang Huahua announced in a short and ambiguous message on March 7 in a news conference on the sidelines of the annual meeting of China's parliament that: "We have already dealt with this according to the law. We have sentenced the criminals, including those who, in enforcing the law, made mistakes," according to Reuters. A later report broadcast in Chinese by Radio Free Asia quoted Huang differently: "We have already dealt with the responsible persons for this accident according to the law. We have appropriately sentenced or punished the persons who did not properly enforce the law and shot protesters." Hong Kong's Beijing-owned Wen Wei Po newspaper reported in 2006 quoting the city's Communist Party organization department director Jiang Haiying, that Shanwei deputy police chief Wu Xing had been fired and placed under "criminal detention" over the shootings.

13. (U) In the Reuters report, Huang was also quoted saying that the incident had "been dealt with appropriately," but he provided no further details. Huang maintained the official story that the incident had been incited by a small group of lawbreakers which resulted in violence.

14. (U) The announced sentencing of police officials was the final

act in a tragedy growing out of the violent riot in December 2005. In May, 2006, Guangdong Disciplinary Inspection Committee announced penalty decisions - internal party reprimands - for other officials held responsible for the Dongzhou Incident (ref A), including one Deputy Party Secretary; the vice-mayor and Director General of the Public Security Bureau (PSB) of Shanwei; the Director General of Shanwei's Construction Bureau; and another Deputy Party Secretary who was also the Deputy Director General of the Shanwei PSB and removed from his position in the PSB. Other officials of the Red Bay Development Zone and Dongzhou Street Administration have been punished.

COMMENT: Protecting Authority Comes First

15. (SBU) As in previous reporting on this incident (reftels), there is a clear distinction between the treatment of officials and villagers involved in violence. This sentencing sends a message from the Communist Party to both the ordinary citizens and security officials about the use of violence in civil unrest situations: crackdowns are permissible, but regrettable, but should not involve excessive violence; villagers are given no latitude once they employ violence. Accordingly, most officials received a light punishment - internal reprimand. Even the figure most responsible for the killing of villagers, the Shanwei Deputy Party Secretary, retained his party position while losing only the PSB-level job. While it is possible that the police officials who were sentenced or punished received harsher punishments, the lack of transparency leads us to believe that while they were punished and possibly removed from their positions, it is likely that their punishment was far lighter than that meted to villagers convicted of attacking the police.

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